

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-58. (Cancelled)

59. (Currently Amended) A cap for use on palletised loads, the cap being of the type having at least two strapping strands retractable into housings through openings at opposite sides of the cap, spring means within the housings for retracting the strapping strands, hooks on ~~the~~ free ends of the strapping strands for engagement with the underside of ~~the~~ a platform of a pallet, tensioning means within the housings for tightening the strapping strands between the cap and the pallet after interposing a load between the cap and the pallet, and stop means for limiting retraction of the hooks into the housings when not engaged with a pallet, characterized in that each tensioning means comprises a slotted crossbar through which ~~the strapping strand~~ a respective one of said strapping strands passes, a lever pivoted within the respective side of the cap and movable in a plane parallel to ~~the~~ a general plane of the cap between an operative position and an inoperative ~~positions~~ position, and a linkage between the lever and the slotted crossbar such that movement of the lever from said inoperative position to said operative position causes rotation of the slotted crossbar to wind the strapping strand round the slotted crossbar, thus enabling tension to be developed in the strapping strand after its hook has been engaged with a pallet, together with manually releasable spring-loaded latch means for securing the strapping strand in tension.

60. (Currently Amended) A cap as in Claim 59, characterized in that the linkage comprises at least one wire secured at one end to the lever and secured at the other end to a pulley secured for rotation with the slotted crossbar, movement of the lever from said inoperative position to said operative position effecting unwinding of the wire from the pulley to cause winding of ~~the strapping strand~~ a respective one of said strapping strands round the slotted crossbar, and with a spring return for re-winding the wire onto the pulley when the lever is moved to effect release of tension in the wire.

61. (Currently Amended) A cap as in Claim 59, characterized in that a ratchet mechanism is incorporated in the linkage between the lever and the slotted crossbar, to enable repeated swinging of the lever to-and-fro to effect as many turns of ~~the strapping strand~~ a respective one of said strapping strands round the slotted crossbar as may be needed for adequate tensioning of the strapping strand and to hold the tension.

62. (Currently Amended) A cap as in Claim 61, characterized in that the lever and ratchet mechanism is in the form of a well-known type of device for tensioning a strap for securing a load on a lorry or a strap on a side sheet for protecting a load on a lorry, in which device the strap is wound round a spool between two arms of a said ~~bifurcated~~ lever, a ratchet being provided between each end of the spool and the respective adjacent arm, the lever arms and spool and ratchets being mounted on a common pivot in a mounting frame, with the ratchets secured for rotation with the spool and the lever rotatable with respect to the spool and ratchets, a drive plate

slidably mounted on the lever, a first spring urging the drive plate into engagement with the ratchet to enable to-and-fro swinging of the lever to wind the strap round the spool and tension it, a second spring urging the latching plate into engagement with the ratchet to latch the ratchet at times when it is not being rotated by driving action of the lever through the drive plate, the drive plate being manually operable against the first spring to disengage it from the ratchet, and a cam on the lever for disengaging the latching plate from the ratchet after the drive plate has encountered and rides along a radius plate fixed in the mounting to hold the drive plate clear of the ratchet when unwinding of the strap from the spool is required, further characterized in that instead of the strap being wound on the spool, a circumferential groove is provided in the spool in which is reeved and wound one end of the wire the other end of which is secured to the pulley for effecting rotation of the slotted crossbar on to which the strapping strand is wound.

63. (Currently Amended) A cap as in Claim 61, characterized in that there is provided a ~~bifurcated lever~~, a spool with a ratchet extending from one end to a circumferential groove adjacent the other end into which the wire is reeved, the lever and the spool being rotatable about a fixed common axis in the housing and the lever being rotatable with respect to the spool, a ratchet drive pawl on a first resilient arm mounted in the lever, a latching pawl on a second resilient arm mounted in the housing to latch the ratchet at times when it is not being rotated by the driving action of the lever through the drive pawl, a fixed stop in the housing for limiting swinging of the lever from inoperative position, manually operable means for disengaging the drive pawl from the ratchet, and a cam on the lever for disengaging the latching pawl from the ratchet after

the drive pawl has encountered and rides along a fixed radius plate in the housing beyond the stop means.

64. (Previously Presented) A cap as in Claim 63, characterized in that the manually operable means for disengaging the drive pawl from the ratchet comprises a slider movable in the lever towards and away from the drive pawl, with a head on a neck passing through a slot in the first resilient arm, the head having lateral projections engaging ramps on each side of the slot when the slider is moved towards the drive pawl.

65. (Currently Amended) A cap as in Claim 64, characterized in that there is provided a fixed abutment in the housing spaced from the fixed stop to be engaged by the slider to urge it back towards ~~its~~ said inoperative position as the drive pawl rides along the radius plate.

66. (Currently Amended) A cap as in Claim 63, characterized in that there is provided a plate or spaced abutments on the lever to lie alongside the second resilient arm when the lever is moved into inoperative position, to ensure that the latching pawl cannot be unintentionally disengaged from the ratchet.

67. (Currently Amended) A cap as in Claim 59, characterized in that each strapping strand is a strap having its end remote from the hook secured to ~~the~~ a barrel of a drum on an axis perpendicular to ~~the~~ said general plane of the cap and the strap twists through 90° between the drum and the slotted

crossbar, with a spring within the drum for retracting the strap when it is free to run through the slotted crossbar.

68. (Previously Presented) A cap as in Claim 59, characterized in that each opening is provided at the back of a recess in the respective side of the cap of a depth front-to-back to receive fully the respective hook, and the bottom of the recess provided with ramping surfaces to effect automatic parking of the hook into the recess upon retraction of the strap into the housing and retention of the hook against dislodgement when the cap is turned over; and the lever is located within a slot in the respective side of the cap extending from the recess.

69. (Previously Presented) A cap as in Claim 59, characterized in that the bulk of the cap is formed of plastics material, with a main molding forming a lower portion, sides and a skirt, one or more moldings forming an upper portion, and with integral wall formations on the upperside of the lower portion defining the housings, the skirt is stepped outwardly from side portions of the cap to enable like caps to be nested with each other and/or with pallets during return transporting as well as to help secure a load on a pallet by embracing the top sides of the load.

70-82. (Cancelled)